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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 333rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 4 October 1996, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BELEMBAOGO

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Mauritius (CRC/C/3/Add.36; HRI/CORE/1/Add.60; CRC/C.12/WP.6) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Peeroo, Mr. Baichoo and Mr. Seetulsingh (Mauritius) resumed their places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation of Mauritius to reply to the points raised at the preceding meeting.

3. Mr. PEEROO (Mauritius), referring to the so-called "exclusion zone" in Mauritius, said that there were some disparities between that zone and the better off areas of the country. The exclusion zone contained some of the few areas where parents tended to be more negligent, failing to pay enough attention to the education of their children, who were left largely to their own devices. Education was free and compulsory in Mauritius, but parents were expected to shoulder their responsibilities as well and, in the places in question, a minority of parents did not behave as the Government expected. The areas were inhabited by working-class people, who were employed but spent their money on drink and gambling. The absence of any culture encouraging saving meant that those areas lagged behind others that were more developed. The new Government, which had inherited the situation, had voted to spend 50 million rupees to bring about improvements in the zone. The Prime Minister himself headed a ministerial committee that had been set up to monitor the situation with a view to enabling those parts of the country to catch up with the development of the rest.

4. Mrs. Eufemio had asked whether it would be possible to calculate precisely how much money was spent on children. No attempt had been made so far to quantify the amounts spent in the different areas relating to children, but the Government would probably agree that it would be a valuable exercise to try to find out how much public money was spent on children overall.

5. Regarding discrimination on grounds of sex, he noted that the initial report had been produced in July 1995 before the Constitution had been amended. Before leaving office, the former Government had enacted an amendment to section 16 of the Constitution which removed all discrimination on grounds of sex. Legislation on its own, of course, was not enough. Effective action needed to be taken where the problem existed and it had therefore been decided that the Criminal Code should be amended in order to make discrimination on grounds of sex an offence. With the help of UNICEF, a former Justice of the Supreme Court had been retained to study the law and make proposals. He had already prepared an amended section of the Criminal Code, which would go next to the Cabinet, and the amendment could be expected to enter into force in the near future.

6. As to whether the police department made any grants for children, he explained that money allocated from the budget to the police service was spent only on the police. Any grant made to children would come from the Ministry of Social Security, together with financial help from the Ministry of

Education and the Ministry of Health. They and the Ministry of Arts and Culture were the major Government departments which spent money on children. In addition, a Government grant was paid through the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development to a parastatal body known as the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. A total of 55 million rupees had been allocated to that body in the current budget. The Fund was concerned with the welfare of workers in the sugar industry and the money was spent on the labourers and their families for educational and cultural purposes.

7. The Children's Hotline was an innovation instituted by the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development. Formerly, there had been some difficulty in coming to the assistance of children in need of protection. The positive decision had therefore been taken to set up a hotline at the Ministry, functioning 24 hours a day. A special service had been set up to ensure that, as soon as a call was received, the necessary action was taken. An inquiry would be held into the case and, if necessary, appropriate police action would be taken against the offender. There were a number of homes, administered by NGOs in collaboration with the Ministry, where children could take refuge and be cared for by volunteer workers. Under the Child Protection Act, the offender, whether or not a parent of the child, would, if found guilty, have to pay a fine or serve a period of imprisonment, depending on the degree of seriousness of the offence. The Child Protection Act protected children against abuse, assault and "harm". The definition of harm in the Act was very wide and covered all sorts of situations.

8. As far as the position of children born out of wedlock was concerned, the law in Mauritius was very progressive. There was no discrimination against such children, who enjoyed the same rights as legitimate offspring in terms of succession, property and so on.

9. In reply to the question about legal assistance, he explained that there was a system of free legal aid in Mauritius. If an application was made for legal aid, the Minister of Social Security would institute an inquiry to see whether the applicant was deserving of assistance. A means test was applied and, currently, an applicant earning more than 3,500 rupees was not eligible for legal aid. The system was, however, to be reviewed, in accordance with the statement in the new Government's political manifesto that justice was a sacred right and people should not be barred by cost from obtaining it.

10. As to whether anything was done to create awareness among children of their rights, he said that, under the Mauritian educational system, various activities were organized in schools and colleges. The Ministry of Education had recently organized a series of talks on human rights in general which had covered the rights of the child.

11. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the delegation could explain further the relationship between the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development and the National Children's Council.

12. Mr. PEEROO (Mauritius) said that the National Children's Council served as a link between the Ministry and non-governmental organizations. The Council itself did not decide policy, which was determined by the Minister in the light of the political manifesto. As far as coordination was concerned,

under the former Government, all NGO activities had been centralized under the aegis of the Council. There had since been a change of policy, emphasizing decentralization. The Council's new functions would have to be determined and its role would probably diminish.

13. Mrs. KARP said the information that a special budget had been voted for the exclusion zone to try to improve the situation there, did not answer her question about what measures were being taken to rehabilitate any children who might have been involved in the dubious places which had been closed down. Coping with the problem of child prostitution demanded integrative action that needed to be focused on children specifically. She would therefore like to know what specific programmes and institutions had been set up to provide treatment for the children concerned.

14. On the elimination of discrimination on grounds of sex, she emphasized that much more was needed than legislation. Practical programmes were required to enhance the situation of girl children and of women in general. Affirmative action by the Government was needed to enable girls and women to enjoy their rights. What action had already been taken in that respect? Was there any policy to encourage the appointment of women to high office in the Government or specific educational programmes such as assertiveness training for girls?

15. Mr. MOMBESHORA said that, according to paragraph 18 (i) of the report, the 1975 Labour Act prohibited the employment of children under the age of 15. He asked whether the Act also applied to the Export Processing Zone or whether special temporary regulations were in force there. He asked whether Mauritius had ratified ILO Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age for employment.

16. Mrs. EUFEMIO suggested that the fee imposed for late registration of the birth of a child should be rescinded, since it might serve as a deterrent to registration and thus have an adverse impact on the future of the child. She also wondered how the non-registration of a child was monitored and whether there were any neighbourhood associations which could detect and report the non-registration of a child in order to protect it.

17. With regard to access to appropriate information, she asked whether every household possessed a radio and television set and whether the entire population, parents as well as children, was literate. The campaign by the Ministry of Education to inculcate reading habits among children was highly commendable. Regarding the protection of the child against information which might be harmful to his development, she wished to know whether parents were trained to identify such material. As far as freedom of association was concerned, she asked whether there were any school or neighbourhood associations and, if so, whether their meetings were well attended. She asked whether the child's right to privacy was respected within the family. With regard to degrading punishment, she asked what disciplinary measures in school and at home were regarded as acceptable and whether there was any bullying.

18. Mrs. BADRAN asked whether there were any special magazines for children and whether children themselves contributed to their content. She also asked whether there were any student organizations in the schools.

19. Miss MASON, referring to the right of participation, asked whether there was any system of peer counselling or peer advocacy in Mauritius. Children often accepted advice better from their peers and such systems could be used to very positive effect. She also asked whether a child seeking redress against his parents could have access to legal aid. There had been some discussion at the preceding meeting of the possibility of appointing a special ombudsman or commissioner for children's rights. The terms of reference of the existing Ombudsman seemed to be to investigate complaints against public officials. Could children avail themselves of his services?

20. Mrs. SARDENBERG, focusing on the general principles of the Convention and, in particular, on non-discrimination, asked whether the preference for male children that existed in some of the countries that had come before the Committee also existed in Mauritius and, if so, how it was reflected in school and in society. According to information the Committee had received, women in Mauritius had far to go to achieve equality, especially in respect of equal pay. She asked how Government policies were dealing with that problem. In consulting reports of other United Nations bodies relating to Mauritius, she had found references to "a policy of differentiation, but not discrimination", especially in the agricultural sector. What was meant by differentiation and how did it relate to the right of the girl child and women in general not to be discriminated against on any grounds?

21. Mr. PEEROO (Mauritius), replying to the question whether the child's views were taken into consideration by parents, at school and in society, said that, in Mauritius, parents did not impose their wishes on their children when it came to decisions about their future. Students were able to seek advice from the Career Guidance Service provided by the Ministry of Education. Young people were very politically aware and it was normal for school children to form their own associations, in which current events were freely discussed.

22. On the question of the rehabilitation of victims of child prostitution, departments of the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development were working in cooperation with independent social welfare organizations to seek out such children and were endeavouring to bring them back to normal life; church organizations also played a very important role.

23. As to the question of discrimination in employment raised by Mrs. Karp, an amendment to the Criminal Code was in course of preparation which would make discrimination illegal, so that anyone who believed he or she had been discriminated against could file a complaint with the police, which would institute an inquiry. As yet, however, there was no actual legislation governing the matter.

24. On the question raised by Mr. Mombeshora, the Labour Act was not in fact applicable to the Export Processing Zone (EPZ). As stated in the report, the employment of children below the age of 15 was illegal in Mauritius, but child labour did not really constitute a problem in the country. Between 1990 and 1995, only 57 cases had been detected and, between May 1995 and June 1996, 5,782 inspections had been carried out, bringing to light only 247 cases of child labour.

25. If parents failed to register the birth of a child within 40 days, they were liable to a fine of 500 rupees; however, consideration would be given to abolishing that penalty. Virtually every family in Mauritius had access to radio and television and many children had their own radios. He emphasized that, educationally, Mauritius was one of the most advanced countries in Africa, with a literacy rate of 90 per cent. Programmes were broadcast not only in English and French, but also in Creole, Hindi, Urdu and Chinese and children of every ethnic group thus had access to information.

26. The dissemination of material likely to be harmful to morality was prohibited by law. Sexually explicit films or television programmes, as well as the sale of pornographic magazines, were banned. On the matter of the privacy of the child within the family, whether or not the child had to share a room with others depended to a large extent on the family's economic situation.

27. Torture did not exist in Mauritius; it was prohibited under the Constitution and by law. Nor were children ever subjected to degrading treatment in schools, since any teacher who assaulted a child would be guilty of a criminal offence and would be likely to lose his job. Misbehaviour by pupils was punished by detentions. However, such punishments were rare, partly because all schools had very active parent-teacher organizations which could discuss any problems that arose and find other solutions. Students had their own magazines in which they were free to express their views and many daily papers had special supplements devoted to student affairs. Young people were also free to hold public demonstrations; recently, for instance, students had staged a sit-in in protest against the lack of provision for mathematics teaching, in which the public had joined.

28. In reply to the question asked by Miss Mason, the provision of legal aid in the case of a child seeking redress against his parents would depend on the circumstances. An assault on a child was a criminal offence and, if a child reported that it had been assaulted, the police would institute proceedings and the Office of the Deputy Public Prosecutor would appoint a barrister to conduct the case. In cases where children were accused of offences, all proceedings involving young persons under 18 years of age would be held in camera and not in open court. Where the parents did not have the means to hire a lawyer, the magistrate would recommend that legal aid should be granted.

29. There was in fact no ombudsman in Mauritius dealing specifically with children's affairs. However, the Committee's concern on the matter, and its recommendation, would be communicated to his Government. On the point raised by Mrs. Sardenberg, it was true that families tended to prefer sons to daughters, but Mauritius was a progressive society and cases of discrimination seldom arose. In reply to the question on equal pay, he said that Mauritius had not yet signed ILO Convention No. 100 because some legal difficulties persisted; however, a seminar funded by the ILO was currently being held in Mauritius on the subject of the Government's accession to several ILO Conventions and he hoped that those difficulties could be overcome. He pointed out that, in the sugar industry, there was no discrimination on

grounds of sex, although there was positive discrimination in the sense that women were not permitted to perform labour considered to be too heavy for them.

30. Mrs. KARP said that her question on the need for affirmative action to close the gender gap had perhaps been misunderstood. It was true that the criminal law could have an influence on how the public perceived certain actions and could thus serve as a deterrent; but, in the field of employment, it could not force an employer to give work to a woman against whom he chose to discriminate. Parallel measures were needed to ensure not only that the offender was punished, but that redress was provided for the woman who had suffered from the discrimination. Affirmative action could take the form of allocating certain high positions to women or organizing leadership courses for them with a view to cultivating more positive attitudes.

31. She noted that the report admitted that there was de facto discrimination against handicapped children because society did not cater for their needs and that the Ministry was finding it difficult to deal with such children. That seemed to amount to an admission of defeat. It had been stated that a survey was being conducted to establish the number of disabled children and the nature of their disabilities. What were the results of that survey, which were the NGOs providing assistance to such children and what was the Government's policy on the matter?

32. It was true that it was difficult to bring to light cases of abuse and violence within the family since most victims were reluctant to go to the police, possibly because the police themselves discouraged such complaints. The punishment of the husband was often not the best solution for the victim and the problem was better dealt with in other ways. For instance, a restraining order could be issued which could have the effect of removing the perpetrator from the house for as long as there was a danger to the life and health of the victim; that was preferable to moving mother and child out of the house and into a shelter. Had the Government considered that kind of approach to the problem of violence within the family?

33. Mrs. EUFEMIO, noting that the delegation had stated that virtually all families in Mauritius had access to radio and television, wondered what was being done to help families who were more disadvantaged in that respect. She was glad to hear that a review of the system of fines for the late registration of births was being contemplated. Following the comments on domestic violence made by Mrs. Karp, she emphasized that some kind of counselling or advice should be provided for the offender in addition to a restraining order, since, otherwise, the violence was likely to recur.

34. Mrs. SARDENBERG said the delegation had indicated that Mauritius was a racially harmonious society. Nevertheless, she would like to know how the principle of non-discrimination was implemented on a day-to-day basis in relation to children of racial minorities. Had any problems been identified, were any surveys being carried out and did the Government have any plans for the future? Was any data available on whether discrimination was practised against children suffering from AIDS and what measures were envisaged in that area?

35. She noted that, in Mauritius, 80 per cent of households were headed by men, but that, at the same time, women accounted for 50 per cent of the labour force. She believed that the Government had not yet taken sufficient measures to provide support for working mothers, such as day-care facilities.

36. Mr. KOLOSOV, referring to the question of domestic violence, asked whether any law or administrative regulation provided for a procedure whereby a child could file a complaint with the police and whether there was any age limit for such complaints. How did the police establish whether or not a child was telling the truth and whether or not disciplinary measures in the family were so excessive as to amount to violence?

37. According to information the Committee had received, domestic violence in Mauritius was on the increase. In a survey conducted by Save the Children, 63 per cent of those questioned had agreed that there was abuse of children in Mauritius and 79 per cent had agreed that ill-treatment of children existed. It would seem that most domestic violence occurred in poor and vulnerable families: in 1992 and 1993, the number of cases had been as high as 3,157. Even taking into account the fact that that figure might simply reflect an increase in the reporting of cases to the police, it still seemed very high for a country with such a small population.

38. Mr. PEEROO (Mauritius) said that, in general, there was no discrimination in employment in Mauritius, although cases might well occur of which the authorities were not aware. Mauritius had not yet signed the ILO convention on the subject because it had as yet no national monitoring agency to investigate possible cases of discrimination. The establishment of such an agency was at present under review with the assistance of ILO.

39. In reply to Mrs. Sardenberg's question on care facilities, he said that most women at work were employed in the export protection zone (EPZ). A number of crèches were already available for working women with small children and a programme was under way for increasing their number.

40. Discrimination against a child on grounds of membership of a minority community was incompatible with the Constitution of Mauritius. However, the concept of such discrimination was irrelevant in Mauritius since the large number of ethnic groups made the country a nation of nothing but minorities. The only possible opening for discrimination was with regard to the enrolment of pupils in schools run by religious groups, the main one being the Catholic Church. However, any such discrimination was prevented by obliging such schools to reserve a quota of places for children of other religions.

41. Mr. SEETULSINGH (Mauritius) said the authorities agreed that legislation was not in itself sufficient to solve children's problems. Considerable resources were devoted in Mauritius to educating both children and adults in various matters, including the rights of the child. Most reasonable families consulted their children on decisions affecting the family and respected their opinions. In the case of bullying in schools, a point raised by Mrs. Eufemio, heads of schools were expected to take action to protect the victims, either by expulsion or correction of the offenders.

42. Peer counselling, where children themselves counselled other children on their problems, had been mentioned by Miss Mason. Mauritius had not yet embarked on such measures. A revolutionary approach was apparently under experiment in the United States whereby children alleged to have committed offences were tried by a child judge and a child jury. However, the merits of applying such an advanced approach in other countries were not yet evident.

43. Disabled children, who had been the subject of a question from Mrs. Sardenberg, were covered in paragraphs 88 to 95 of the report, which acknowledged that much remained to be done for such children. Unfortunately, Mauritius, as a small country of modest means, did not have sufficient resources to deal with the issue on its own. Although the Government did its best, much had to be left to the good offices of non-governmental organizations. There were about 15 such organizations working with the disabled with some assistance from the Government.

44. On the subject of domestic violence, Mrs. Karp had noted that it should not be the victims, but the perpetrators of violence that should be removed from the family home. That was the normal procedure followed in Mauritius in the case of child beating by a parent. Proceedings could be instituted against the parent and, in the case of a serious offence, the parent could be sent to prison. The delegation nevertheless accepted that it would be useful to remove an abusive parent from the family for psychological treatment to enable the root cause of the abuse, i.e. drugs, alcohol or other, to be tackled. However, such remedies required resources that Mauritius did not have.

45. In reply to Mrs. Sardenberg, he said that Mauritius had some 90 cases of HIV/AIDS. No child had yet been determined to have HIV infection, although seven children whose mothers were HIV positive were at present being kept under observation by the AIDS unit. The authorities were providing the financial assistance needed for the purpose.

46. He was unclear about the purpose of the question on families headed by men. The Civil Code of Mauritius, which had adopted all the reforms incorporated in the 1965 amendment of the French Civil Code, made no reference to paternal authority and considered the sexes to be equal in the context of the family. Personality counted for much in the family and the head of a family was often the spouse with the stronger character. In most families, both parents accepted their equal status and took decisions relating to their children together. Mauritius had few one-parent families headed by an unmarried mother; it was not a family model Mauritius society wished to encourage.

47. Some disturbing statistics provided by the Save the Children fund had been quoted by Mr. Kolosov. The delegation of Mauritius was not aware of the situation reflected by those statistics. What kind of survey had produced them and who had been those questioned? Statistics were often deceptive; it was often easy to read more into them than was justified, especially in a case where a survey had been concerned with matters of opinion. If the number of cases said to be reported to the police were correct, then it was clear that

steps ought to be taken to tackle the problem. When cases were reported to the police, efforts were made to have specialized staff to deal with them in the interests of preventing any increase in domestic violence.

48. Mrs. BADRAN asked whether, in view of the increasing number of women at work, the authorities might consider making it a legal requirement for enterprises with a large female labour force to provide day-care facilities at the workplace. Such a measure would encourage working women to continue breast-feeding, a practice that appeared to be in decline in Mauritius. Were any services other than day-care centres provided for working women to make it easier for them to meet their responsibilities inside and outside the home?

49. Were there any programmes directed to single-parent families, in particular those headed by women? According to information in her possession, some 18 per cent of families in Mauritius fell into that category. Such families needed not only financial, but also social, support.

50. On the subject of the survey mentioned by Mr. Kolosov, she agreed that the procedures used by some surveys did require scrutiny. However, the fact that a large number of children had a perception of the existence of violence did invite reflection. What kind of ill-treatment was referred to by the 79 per cent who asserted its existence?

51. The report mentioned school discussions to tell children how to protect themselves against abuse. The mass media could be another channel serving the purpose not only of informing children, but also of educating the perpetrators of violence and teaching parents how to protect their children. The staff members of the National Council were said to be professional counsellors. What preparation had they received? Was there any system of in-service training to ensure they were conversant with the Convention and applied its principles, in particular that of the best interests of the child, in their work?

52. Mr. KOLOSOV welcomed the seriousness with which the delegation approached the question of domestic violence. In the survey he had mentioned, the figure of over 3,000 reports of domestic violence had come from the police authorities themselves. At what age would a child coming to file a complaint of violence with the police be taken seriously by the authorities? Although there was no legislation on the subject, there were perhaps administrative rules providing instructions to the police on the procedures to be followed when complaints were received from children.

53. Miss MASON said that, when she had mentioned peer counselling and peer advocacy, she had not had as revolutionary a procedure in mind as that being tested in the United States. Her question had been whether Mauritius made use of its more knowledgeable and articulate children to disseminate information on the Convention and on child rights in general. Mrs. Badran had, for example, referred to children's associations.

54. Although some day-care facilities did exist in Mauritius, the report admitted that they were not subject to any form of control by the authorities and that the level of care provided left something to be desired. What progress was being made in drafting regulations to govern day-care centres?

55. On the subject of the increasing number of families headed by women given changing family patterns in Mauritius, had any study been made of the social impact of that situation on children? Had there been any increase in antisocial behaviour among children from such families?

56. Financial assistance to families appeared from the report to be confined to those with disabled children. Was there any legislation or system for recovering child maintenance from defaulting parents?

57. There appeared to be a large gap in living standards between the haves and the have-nots in Mauritius. Four per cent of the population apparently controlled 70 per cent of the economy. Given the obligation under article 7 of the Convention to maintain adequate standards of living for children and families, what financial or other measures were being taken to guarantee such standard for disadvantaged families? Was there a national minimum wage?

58. Mauritius appeared to have an adequate system for adoption in place at the national level. Was the same true of intercountry adoption? What procedures were followed in that case and had any thought been given by the Government to ratifying the Hague Convention?

59. Mrs. KARP said that she was disappointed with the reply given in respect of disabled children. The way a society treated its disabled was generally an indicator of how it treated children in general, as well as other members of society. The Government itself should be involved in action to assist the disabled and not leave most of such work to non-governmental organizations. Had the Government any plan of action for dealing with disabled children, such as providing facilities to enable them to attend normal schools? Did the institutions for the disabled cover all their needs? What was being done to educate the public not to discriminate against disabled children?

60. Additional strategies were needed to deal with domestic violence. Acknowledgement of the existence of the problem was often the first step to dealing with it. Consideration should be given to the introduction of restraining orders to remove violent family members from the home and allow them to receive non-custodial non-penal treatment while following their normal course of life. Research had shown that the majority of perpetrators of domestic violence could be helped in that way. The authorities in Mauritius might find it helpful to consider models of such ways of dealing with offenders in order to select one that would best suit their society.

61. She asked what efforts were being made to ensure participation by children in education, such as in the disciplinary process, the preparation of curricula, the quality of courses and the expression of views on school life in general.

62. Mrs. SARDENBERG asked what kind of support services existed for families from disadvantaged population groups and requested further information on the high concentration of single-parent families in Rodrigues. She also asked about the policy relating to maternity leave and whether it was implemented uniformly throughout Mauritius.

63. Had the Government's programme on HIV/AIDS prevention progressed and had it been evaluated or studies carried out on problems such as discrimination against persons infected with the HIV virus? She was also interested in the media's role in the AIDS prevention campaign.

64. Mrs. EUFEMIO asked whether Mauritians understood the provisions of the Convention relating to their right to raise children according to their religious beliefs. Since the experience of appearing in court was traumatic for a child, she wished to know whether counselling or other methods of mediation in domestic disputes were considered before legal proceedings were instituted.
She also asked what arrangements were made for infants living with their mothers in prison, as referred to in paragraph 52 of the report.

65. What criteria, besides financial, were used in determining the fitness of the extended family to support a child? How did the Government expect to curb the trend towards single-parent households if single persons were allowed to adopt children? She wondered how stable a child's life could be in simple adoptions where the child's natural parents were involved in his upbringing, and whether the risk of the revocation of the adoption was not increased by such involvement.

66. Mr. SEETULSINGH (Mauritius) said that the statistics on children who were victims of violence and other forms of abuse could be found on pages 14 and 15 of the written replies. Police officers were expected to exercise discretion and, when minors reported acts of violence perpetrated against them, the police was required to conduct thorough investigations and take follow up action on all reports.

67. Day-care facilities were provided for working mothers, within the means available, but there was still room for improvement. While foreign investors were expected to respect the country's labour laws, they could not be expected to meet financial demands which made their ventures unprofitable. The Mauritian Government was committed to the improvement of social conditions and would endeavour to implement the recommendations made by the Committee in that regard.

68. There were very few abandoned children in Mauritius, but no comprehensive study had been conducted to determine the extent of the problem.
Paragraphs 88 to 95 of the report described the facilities and benefits offered by the Government and NGOs to disabled children and their families. However, their needs in the areas of diagnosis, education and care required further attention.

69. Child support and alimony payments were enforced by the district courts and, in cases of non-compliance with obligations, assistance could be sought from legal-aid clinics, probation officers and district magistrates. Although Mauritius had not yet ratified the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, the Government followed developments in private international law to the best of its ability.

70. Mrs. Karp's suggestion that Mauritius should consider models used by other countries was a good one, but the problem was knowing which model to

choose, as country profiles differed greatly. Technical assistance was highly desirable, but, without the necessary resources, the Mauritian Government could not implement the measures recommended by experts.

71. The problem of single-parent families was greatest on the island of Rodrigues, where the central Government of Mauritius had invested heavily in the improvement of facilities in all sectors, particularly health and education.

72. Twelve weeks were granted as maternity leave without exception throughout Mauritius, and it was hoped that legislation on paternity leave would eventually be adopted.

73. Information on the progress of the AIDS prevention programme was not available, but Mauritius had been successful in controlling the spread of the disease. Sex tourism was strongly discouraged by the Government.

74. In reply to Mrs. Eufemio's question on religious beliefs, he explained that Mauritius had an ethnically diverse society and that the extended family network was strong in all ethnic groups. Religious beliefs were passed on within families, but persons were not prevented from changing their religion.

75. Most adoptions in Mauritius were full adoptions because there was no guarantee that simple adoptions would not be revoked. Adoptions by single parents, while possible, were unusual. The National Adoption Council had been established to regulate the adoption of Mauritian children by foreigners to curb child trafficking for commercial purposes. The single case of a child living in a Mauritian prison was being resolved and the child was to be adopted by a close relative. The authorities had provided all the necessary facilities for the accommodation of the child.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.